

# TO THE FROM URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

GENTLEMEN,—Again I have to report a most satisfactory year, at least from the health standpoint. A mild winter, a glorious spring, a pleasant summer, and a fruitful autumn, with no extremes of temperature, have combined to preserve the health of the community, and the death-rate is low in consequence, lower than in 1903, though not quite as low as in 1902. Immunity from epidemic disease has been remarkable, especially, until the last month, of influenza, and there was an almost entire absence of summer diarrhoea. Our rainfall has been about normal, only three-fifths of the record total of 1903.

Jan. 3.87 ... April 1.89 ... July 1.37 ... Oct. 2.06  
Feb. 4.34 ... May 3.23 ... Aug. 2.36 ... Nov. 2.56  
Mar. 2.16 ... June 1.37 ... Sep. 1.91 ... Dec. 3.23  
Total 30.40 ins. In 1903 49.47 ins. In 1902 29.28 ins.

The zymotic death-rate is practically *nil*. None has occurred from any notifiable infectious disease. The infantile death-rate shows a most satisfactory decrease, being only little more than half of last year, but there have been markedly less births.

The registered number of births was 213, as against 258 last year, and 245 in 1902. There is, I think, a continuous decrease in the number of large families, not only here but throughout the country. This may, from a provident point of view in these lean times, and with a threatened advance in the price of food, be an advantage, but it is never well for a country when its birth-rate sensibly decreases. The male births were 102, and the female 111, strangely the excess being on the female side. There were eight illegitimate births—two in the Workhouse. It is a noteworthy coincidence that this number has not varied in the last four years, the figures recurring with unfailing accuracy. The birth-rate is very low as I stated above—19.06 per 1,000 inhabitants, as against 23.14, 22.07, 23.65, 22.92, and 25.02 in the years 1899 to 1902. The average for England and Wales is approximately 28.5.

We have had less epidemic sickness than I have ever known. Notifications of only 14 cases in 13 houses, have been sent me, these being mostly of the absurdly and dubiously named disease erysipelas. There has been no death from any notifiable disease, and except in one instance no contagious disease has been carried from one house to another. This I think speaks very well for the vigorous and efficient way in which your Sanitary Inspectors perform their duties. The notifications in detail were:—Erysipelas, 7; scarlatina 3; diphtheria, 3; enteric fever, 1.

One case of diphtheria was removed to the Isolation Hospital. In the two cases existing in adjoining houses, the disease had obviously been imported from a neighbouring town. The enteric fever case was removed to the Victoria Hospital. All the cases were slight and did well. The premises in which they occurred were thoroughly inspected and fumigated. Only in December did influenza become prevalent. I speak of course from my own personal observation, and though two deaths were reported to me, the type was never severe. 160 deaths were registered in the year as against 169 in 1903, 156 in 1902, and 186 in 1901. Of these 13 were non-resident in the district. I append tables of time, age, and causation, to compare with those of 1902—our record year of health—and 1903:—

	1902.	1903.	1904.
(I.) January, February, March ...	35	53	47
April, May, June ...	45	37	40
July, August, September ...	33	34	32
October, November, December ...	43	45	41
Totals ...	156	169	160

	1902.	1903.	1904.
(II.) Under 1 year ...	15	31	15
From 1 to 5 years ...	12	13	5
„ 5 to 15 years ...	4	5	6
„ 15 to 25 years ...	8	7	6
„ 25 to 65 years ...	47	37	46
Over 65 years ...	70	76	82
Totals ...	156	169	160

	1902.	1903.	1904.
(III.) (Seven) Zymotic diseases ...	8	16	2
Other Septic ...	5	1	1
Tubercular ...	10	13	18
Malignant ...	13	11	16
Apoplexy ...	13	13	8
Diseases of nervous system ...	15	8	5
Circulatory system ...	20	23	19
Respiratory organs ...	10	15	22
Digestive organs ...	8	13	5
Excretory organs ...	4	2	9
Alcoholism and cirrhosis of liver ...	1	2	1
Premature birth ...	4	2	5
Age ...	35	39	41
Injuries ...	3	5	0
All other causes ...	7	5	8
Totals ...	156	169	160

	1902.	1903.	1904.
(IV.) Zymotic diseases ...			
Enteric fever ...	1	1	0
Measles ...	7	7	0
Scarlatina ...	0	0	0
Diarrhoea ...	0	2	2
Whooping cough ...	0	6	0
	8	16	2

Thirty-two deaths were registered from the various public institutions in the town. Of these 13 were non-resident. The death-rate this year is calculated on a population of 11,171. Last year it was 11,145, but I believe we have increased in number, and this is a fair estimate.

	1902.	1903.	1904. Per 1,000 living.
General death-rate ...	14.05	15.16	14.32
Ditto, allowing for non-residents ...	12.34	13.62	13.159
Zymotic death-rate ...	.72	1.43	.179
			Per 1,000 Births.
Infantile death-rate ...	61.22	120.15	70.15

I am unable to give the general death-rate for England and Wales, but it will be higher than ours.

Our health, then, has been excellent in every way, and although last year I was sorry to note a large increase in the infantile death-rate, this year I am glad to report a corresponding decrease. Our water supply is always good, drainage has been supplied to many houses, and the house accommodation continues to improve: one case alone of overcrowding has been submitted to me. I think that inordinate fear of “draught” still prevails, and people don’t want to open their windows even when able to do so, but they wash more and are beginning to see that external dirt is not necessary to vital health. But the medical profession has not yet won the battle against the old women’s ideas, and have still to work hard to do so.

1.—Tubercular diseases are again unfortunately responsible for a larger number of deaths—five more than last year—and that in spite of improved methods of treatment and general sanitation. I am unable to account for this. Tubercular people develop quickly in many cases, and marry young, handing down the inheritance to their offspring. It is difficult to know how this can be prevented.

2.—The deaths from cancer have also increased, also being five more than last year, and the remarks I have made on tubercular disease apply also to this scourge. Without despairing of an antidote being found for



these microbes, yet there has been a tendency of late to ignore the fact of heredity which must be the most important after all. Germs will not grow freely in tissues which are not suited to them, and if persons with a family history of malignant disease did not marry, we should at any rate diminish the death-rate from this terrible disease.

Among the deaths 13 were from parishes beyond the Urban District, three in the Victoria Hospital, and ten in the Union Workhouse Infirmary. No death has occurred in the Diocesan Home; none also at the Isolation Hospital, which has only received one inmate, a patient suffering from diphtheria.

We have not had occasion to tax its resources, but the very fact that we have such an institution is a great safeguard to the public. The only case of enteric which arose was sent to the Victoria Hospital, as I suggested last year. I do not see why with our water and drainage, this disease should ever appear unless imported. We have not found it necessary to use the fumigation chamber.

The sewage system works admirably, and I have had few complaints. Certainly the tanks at Spring Gardens have caused but little nuisance. I am glad to see that the cottages at Albion-place have been properly connected and the sewer extended into Marston Back-lane.

We are weeding out the insanitary closets, but there are still a number left without proper water flush. The abolition of these is one of the urgent needs of the town.

I rejoice that the Council have taken energetic action in various cases of unventilated cottages and badly trapped drains, and that it has been supported by the magistrates.

Our town water supply is as good as ever. Five samples from pumps and wells within the town have been sent me for analysis; three were distinctly bad and two indifferent in quality. Several premises have been closed during the year for various reasons. Your Inspector will, I have no doubt, report fully on the steps taken.

The various bakehouses have been visited and I have had no complaint to make, having found them clean and in varying degrees well ventilated.

In concluding my report of this uneventful year, allow me to thank you gentlemen for your unfailing courtesy, and the staff for the prompt and efficient way in which they have responded on any request or direction I have sent to them.

Your obedient servant,

FREDERICK PARSONS,

Medical Officer of Health.

February 23rd, 1905.

THE FROME  
Urban District Council.

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ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
Medical Officer of Health

*for the year 1904.*

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MARCH, 1905.